

Don Roberts, Chair of Health and Human Services and Committee

MTAP has provided excellent service to the deaf and hard of hearing people. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing people finally have equal access to the telecommunications services like the hearing consumers. I am Betty Van Tighem, a deaf consumer from Great Falls and I use video relay services a lot. My husband is hard of hearing and he can use phone services. I really hate to rely on him to make calls for me. In the past I used to feel reluctant when I needed to ask my husband or neighbors or friends to make calls for me.

The Video Relay Service (VRS) really promotes me to be independent. In the past year I was able to use VRS to make calls to my family to notify of my sister's death. At present I often call the lawyer. I have been able to call my doctor or receive calls to discuss the medical reports. Instead of driving to business places, I use VRS to discuss my wishes with them.

Please leave the VRS fund alone. I really appreciate your continued support of keeping the VRS fund intact. I cherish my independence of making calls myself.

Thank you.

Betty Van Tighem

Dear Mr. Don Roberts, Chair

My name is Alice Guilbert from Great Falls and I am sorry that I won't be able to show up for the hearing as scheduled on Monday morning due to bad weather.

I want to tell how much my husband, Derald and I appreciate the VRS (Video Relay Services) very much and it enables our communication access with various agencies and hearing people. It truly is a privilege for the deaf and hard of hearing people, just like the hearing people who need to contact us without much hassle. We could not think of going without VRS, as we really depend on VRS at all times.

Lastly, we want to ask for your support to encourage the legislators to safeguard MTAP fund on VRS in case FCC ever happens to order every state to take over. So it would be nice that MTAP would be well prepared to take care of VRS. We deaf and hard of hearing community is fortunate to have those dedicated MTAP staff and committee who have been working diligently to promote our communication access, not only this, the former staff and members back to 1991.

Thank you,

Alice Guilbert

Chair Roberts,

I urge you to keep MATP fund on Video Relay Service. The VRS is important for the deaf and hard of hearing because we appreciate the access to all hearing people and businesses by using VRS. I love it because it is more enjoyable to communicate with the hearing people and the deaf as well.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

James Trunkle

Dear Mr. Roberts,

I am a Deaf adult and a president of Montana Association of the Deaf. I represent all deaf and hard of hearing residents in Montana. Also I am a board member of Montana Telecommunications Access Program (MTAP).

I represent myself today as a Deaf consumer to Video Relay Service (VRS). I use VRS everyday to call. It gives me independence to make calls without asking someone else to make the calls for me. I was born in 1955 and I have been watching how technology changes lives for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. VRS dramatically changes my life. I remember the times I had to drive to the doctor's office to make an appointment. Or to be embarrassed by asking my neighbor to make a call especially when it involved personal reasons to make one. Now with VRS, I can converse in my language which is American Sign Language without struggling with English. The interpreters working for VRS are wonderful and they are trained to convey the message between two languages. This barrier is not there like when I was a teenager.

Right now, FCC is taking care of VRS bills for all over the U.S. FCC is thinking to turn over the responsibility of paying the bill to each state. Eventually, it will happen with no doubt. MTAP is always a step ahead and very prepared for any future expenses. If you take money out of MTAP, it will impair our way of communicating via VRS. It means going back 20 years ago and that is something I cannot fathom.

Please do not take any money from MTAP. Without money, MTAP is ineffective. MTAP makes many people who are suffering with some kind of hearing loss become more independent. It is our right to be equal with people who have no kind of hearing loss.

Thank you.

Char Harasymczuk, Billings

Cheryl Dickens

606 N. 5th Avenue #104

Bozeman, Montana 59715

Dear Mr. Roberts,

I am here to voice my concern about my Video Relay Service.

It is a convenient way to call my family, hearing friends, make a doctor's appointment, even call a utility, landlord, my bank or call order a pizza. It is not only for these reasons I need to contact. Actually it is everything I can conact via the VRS anytime. I am very independent and take care of my matters with the relay every day. I can't image that I have to go back to the old way like asking the neighbor to make a call for me or write a letter before I can make a trip to get there or have to come in and discuss about the matter even in a bad weather. The video interpreters respond within seconds to assist us in placing my call. THE VIDEO RELAY SERVICE MUST STAY IN OUR GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET EVERY YEAR. PLEASE CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THIS VALUABLE SERVICE. I cherish this valuable relay very much.

Thank you, Cheryl Dickens, Bozeman, MT

Dear Mr. Don Roberts, Chair of Health and Human Services,

I am asking for your support in continuing the MTAP fund on Video Relay Service (VRS). Video Relay Service is very important for me and to the Deaf community. The ability and the access to use VRS has make a lot of difference in our life. I am able to make many personal calls with some business, doctors appointments, and parents of deaf students. The communication between the hearing and deaf people through the VRS do make our communication more effectively and clearly.

Please support the MTAP fund on VRS.

Thank you,

Sincerely,
Brenda LeMieux

My name is Beverly LeMieux and I live in Great Falls. The Video Relay Service (aka a Video Interpreting Service must stay in our government's budget every year. It allows deaf, hard of hearing individuals to communicate over video telephone with hearing people in a real-time. I have use VRS a lot to make doctor's appointment, call and discuss on issues with some business. I get to have equal access by using VRS as the hearing people do have the same access. It is very important for me and please continue to provide the valuable service. Please leave the monies alone and keep in our government budget. Thank you for your attention.

Dear Mr. Don Roberts, Chair of Health and Human Services,

We would greatly appreciate your support in continuing the MTAP fund on Video Relay Service (VRS).

We love the ability to use to the VRS to help us communicate with hearing people to clearly make doctor appointments, contact Auto and Life Insurance Companies, and many other businesses.

VRS is VERY important for the Deaf Community, please support the MTAP fund, we appreciate your attention to this matter.

Thank You,

Sincerely,

Rolph and Lois Foster, Joplin, MT